

The School Board Corner

By Thomas Villacres, Garrisonville District
February 2005

It's hard to believe that the school year is half over. Besides mid-year exams, the results of our students' efforts can be seen in the many awards, performances and other accomplishments that happen regularly in our County. Congratulations to our students who participated in academic, sports, music and other events and competitions. And a special congrats to the NSHS Cheerleaders – state champs – and the NSHS Football Squad – Division 5 runners-up. The academic and extracurricular success in Stafford County Schools happens because of people like you – teachers, coaches, advisers and parents – who give generously of your time and talents to ensure a quality education for our children.

As we move into the new calendar year, we will begin the annual budget process. Even with the School Board's best efforts to continue squeezing the maximum value out of every budget dollar, we will no doubt be faced with some tough decisions. I encourage all residents of Stafford County to seek as much information about the budget as possible and to share your thoughts with us. The public may ask questions at any of the Superintendent's public budget presentations and may comment at any of the Board's public meetings (see www.staffordschools.net for more info). You can also contact your School Board members and County Supervisors directly with your questions or suggestions.

Although it may seem at times that the School Board and Board of Supervisors are at odds, this is partly because of the way Virginia government is structured. The School Board is elected to advocate for educational requirements, with no authority to raise revenue. The Board of Supervisors has exclusive authority to raise local revenue to fund schools and other local services. As a result, if the School Board believes that new schools are necessary, but the Board of Supervisors believes that they are not affordable, then there is conflict.

In December, the Board of Supervisors voted to delay funding part of the School Board's plan for constructing new schools to alleviate severe overcrowding, especially at our middle schools. As a result, the School Board is now considering less favorable options, including using temporary additional classrooms (modulars or trailers) and additional attendance zone changes. We will be asking for your input as we work to minimize the impact on our students.

Recently, the School Board had to make some tough decisions on changing high school attendance zones to open Mountain View High School and balance the enrollments at the other high schools. This is a very emotional subject and not one that the Board takes lightly. We appreciate the input from the public. Unfortunately, the delays in funding for our next high school made this decision more difficult and affected more families. While we were understandably not able to get to a point where everyone was happy, I believe that we made the best decision possible given the academic needs and the availability of facilities.

Please remember our military and public safety forces in a special way, and those faced with tragedy around the world. And be proud of our accomplishments here at home – in our schools – as we work to meet the needs of every child, in every classroom, every day.

Tom Villacres
Garrisonville District

Dana Reinboldt	Griffis-Widewater	659-1487	dreinboldt@grwsb.com
Karen Zink	Hartwood	752-9308	karen4schools@aol.com
Patricia Healy	Rockhill	659-8222	triciahealy@hotmail.com
Robert Hunt	Aquia	659-3704	robert_hunt@msn.com
Robert Belman	Falmouth	899-2138	RobertBelman@cox.net
Ed Sullivan	George Washington	373-1983	esulliva@juno.com
Thomas Villacres	Garrisonville	659-0888	tom@villacres.org